



COUNTRY

OVERVIEW

& PACKING

GUIDELINES

**Portugal: Sustainability and Environmental Justice**

Fall 2024

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# COUNTRY OVERVIEW

## GENERAL INFORMATION

Portugal officially became a kingdom in 1139. Its borders have barely changed since 1297 when the Portuguese and Spanish signed a treaty handing over the Algarve to Portugal. The first king, Afonso I, came to power in 1143 and Portugal remained a kingdom for the next 800 years until 1910 when it became a republic. Portugal, officially the Portuguese Republic (República Portuguesa) lies along the Atlantic coast of the Iberian Peninsula in southwestern Europe. Once continental Europe's greatest power, Portugal shares many common features—geographic and cultural—with the countries of both northern Europe and the Mediterranean. Portugal includes the Atlantic archipelagos of the Azores and Madeira, both autonomous regions with their own regional governments.

In the twentieth century, under the regime of the dictator Salazar, many Portuguese citizens emigrated to other European countries, the US, Canada, Brazil, among other countries in search of a better life.

The Revolução dos Cravos (Carnation Revolution) in 1974 saw the return of democracy to the country and independence granted to almost all of Portugal's overseas territories. As a legacy of Portugal's colonial empire, the Portuguese language is spoken in nine other



countries: Brazil, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea Bissau, East Timor, Equatorial Guinea, Macau, Cape Verde, and São Tomé and Príncipe.

As tourism is a major source of revenue in Portugal, it is very important for the Portuguese to be able to speak at least one other language. English is widely spoken in Portugal, especially in urban areas. For the most part, there are English translations on major street signs and tourist destinations.

## CLIMATE AND GEOGRAPHY

### Lisbon, Portugal: AVERAGE HIGH/LOW TEMPERATURES (°F)

JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY
57/46	61/48	64/50	66/54	70/55
AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC
82/64	79/63	72/59	61/54	59/50

The climate of Portugal is temperate and influenced by the Atlantic Ocean. However, within the country the climate varies considerably from north to south and from one region to another, but in general Portugal offers warm and sunny summers, mild winters, and autumn and spring are normally warm albeit with some wind and rainfall.

The winter in Portugal generally begins in late November and lasts until February. March, April, and October are normally very mild, and the summer is a nice long period from May to September. Portugal's highest peak is Mount Pico on the island of Pico in the Azores. This ancient volcano, which measures 2,351 m (7,713 ft) is an iconic symbol of the Azores, while the Serra da Estrela on the mainland (the summit being 1,991 m (6,532 ft) above sea level) is an important seasonal attraction for winter sports enthusiasts.

Portugal has 5 major rivers; The Mondego begins in the Serra da Estrela. The Douro, Minho and Guadiana rivers all originate in Spain and flow into the Atlantic. The main river, the Tagus (Tejo), also has its source in Spain and empties into the Atlantic near Lisbon, splitting the country into two geographically highly diverse areas.

Northern Portugal is mountainous and hilly and characterized by many small farms and vineyards. The regions of the north tend to be a little cooler than the south and also have more rainfall which fosters the development of the more fertile agricultural areas that predominate in the north.

To the south, the landscape is dominated by rolling hills and plains and the climate is warmer and drier than the north. Southern Portugal is also known as the Alentejo which means "beyond the Tejo (Tagus)". The far south of the country is the Algarve region which is dry and sunny and mostly characterized by fishing and coastal towns, making it a popular tourist destination. Another fascinating feature of Portugal's south coast is the Ria Formosa which is a designated nature reserve of over 170 km<sup>2</sup> with sandy islands and home to numerous different birds during the migratory periods in the spring and autumn.

Portugal's exclusive economic zone, a sea zone over which the Portuguese have special rights over the exploration and use of marine resources, has 1,727,408 km<sup>2</sup>. This is the 3rd largest exclusive economic zone of the European Union and the 11th largest in the world.

## LOCAL CUSTOMS

The Portuguese are hard-working, curious and somewhat idiosyncratic. They simply cannot stay still. On the other hand, present in the Portuguese way of life, is the feeling of *saudade*, an untranslatable Portuguese term that refers to a constant sense of loneliness,

sadness, and incompleteness. *Saudade* can be used to say that you miss someone or something, ranging from craving a food we enjoy to a deep feeling of mourning a love you have lost or never had. This beautiful word is deeply connected to the Portuguese soul, that can be also described as very melancholic and romantic. More than a sentiment, *saudade* is a form of national culture and identity. The Portuguese people are very warm and friendly, but they are also nostalgic and very sensitive.

This nostalgic longing of *saudade* is found in Fado, the most famous and traditional music in Portugal. Fado is generally sung by a single person (the fadista) along with a Portuguese guitar.

Portuguese love soccer, *futebol*, an important activity that unites people but can divide them when it comes to the *Taça da Liga* (soccer club competition)! The three major teams are FC Porto, Benfica, and Sporting. Most Portuguese are divided into these three football teams and love to get together and cheer for their team. When the Portuguese team won the Eurocup in 2016, there were celebrations all around the country and thousands of people went to the airport to wait for the players.

Portuguese people are very good hosts and can spend hours preparing a meal. They will always try their best to make you feel at home and will repeatedly check that everything is alright or if you need anything. In Portugal, it is very common to take a gift to the person who receives us. If the context of the meal is formal, it would not be uncommon to bring flowers for the host. For a more casual event, you can take a drink or a homemade dessert.

The Portuguese value family and friends and treasure the moments they get to spend with each other. Sundays are always dedicated to family when everyone gathers and enjoys a meal together. You will learn a lot about unity, bonding and affection when spending time with Portuguese people.

Portuguese are usually more traditional and conservative when it comes to the work environment, with some sense of formality when dealing with each other, which is displayed in the form of extreme politeness. Appearances matter in Portuguese society, especially in the cities. People are fashion conscious and clothes can indicate social standing and success. They take great pride in their appearance, being well-kept and clean.

Portugal is a culture that respects hierarchy, society and business are highly stratified and vertically structured. People respect authority and look to those above them for guidance and decision making.



Initial greetings are reserved, yet polite and gracious, a strong handshake accompanied with direct eye contact are the appropriate greeting for any time of day. Once a personal relationship has developed, greetings become more personal; men may greet each other with a hug and a handshake, and women or women and

men kiss each other twice on the cheek, starting with the right.

## DIET

### Special Diets:

SIT Study Abroad provides experiential learning opportunities where students become embedded in their host community. As such, we strive to accommodate serious food allergies where possible, but simply cannot ensure that all dietary restrictions or non-medically mandated diets can be accommodated.

Students are encouraged to participate in the local food culture as a central aspect of daily life. By trying to replicate your diet at home you may miss out on an important part of your host culture. Due to the unique living and learning community central to all SIT programs, we cannot separate food and eating communally from the program experience. Please consider local diet seriously when selecting your program of choice. Your admissions counselor is a great resource in better understanding the local diet.

There are three meals a day. In the morning, between 7:30 am and 10:00 am, a light breakfast, usually consisting of a drink (coffee with milk “meia de leite”, an espresso, or juice) and toast or a sandwich, which is often consumed in the neighborhood café or patisserie. The main meals are lunch, between 12:00 and 14:00, during the week normally in a restaurant close to the workplace, and dinner between 19:00 and 21:00. For most people, they have full meals both at lunchtime and dinnertime, which may include soup, a main course and dessert (sweet or fruit). Between the two meals, it is common to have a snack mid- afternoon (around 16:30-17:00), such as a drink and a pastry (e.g., Pastéis de Nata). Portuguese diet is Mediterranean with main dishes typically including a rice or potato with a meat or seafood, and vegetables and legumes.

**Note:** Seafood allergies in particular will need to take special caution in Portugal as seafood is

typical in most restaurants. If you have special dietary needs, including allergies, please inform our office prior to the start of your program. We will advise you on realistic expectations about avoiding or incorporating certain foods within the program context. |

## SAFETY, SECURITY, AND HEALTH

Maintaining good health is essential to having a successful study abroad experience.

SIT recommends doing your own research to stay up to date on [CDC guidelines](#). It will be critical that you educate yourself about the potential health and safety hazards that may exist in your areas of travel and make informed decisions about what preventative measures to take prior to departure. SIT encourages students to have an informed discussion with your doctor and/or a travel clinician about what vaccines and other prophylactic medication you should receive.

Consider your normal routines for maintaining your physical and mental health & wellbeing. How might your program impact your ability to continue these routines? With this in mind, SIT strongly recommends bringing a full semester's supply of prescription medication(s). Getting a prescription filled outside of one's home country is very difficult, if not impossible. Equally challenging is receiving medication from home by mail. Therefore, students should bring an entire semester's worth of medication with them. Students are also advised to bring several extra inhalers and/or Epi-pens if prescribed.

Students should speak with their health care provider and/or a travel clinician and consult [CDC guidelines](#) regarding required and recommended immunizations and country regulations. Students participating on programs that require the yellow fever vaccine, will receive a signed and stamped "yellow card" after getting vaccinated, known as the International Certificate of Vaccination or Prophylaxis (ICVP, which can be printed here). It is important to bring this card with you when

traveling to the program. SIT recommends that students insert this document into their passport so that it is easily accessible when requested by immigration officials. Even if yellow fever is not a requirement for your program, it is good practice to bring a copy of your immunization record with you, including your Covid 19 immunization card(s).

If you have any questions, please reach out to the [Student Health Office](#).

Remember that while you are a student in a cultural education program in your host country, you are also an ambassador for your home country, home institution, and SIT Study Abroad. We ask all students to abide by all policies and guidelines in order to help maintain those important relationships as well as their own safety and wellbeing. Failure to abide by established guidelines may result in disciplinary measures.

Portugal was ranked as the 3rd safest country in the world by the Global Peace Index in 2020. Nevertheless, bear in mind that Portugal is popular with travelers and so you must be mindful of pickpocketing. This being said, be sensible in your choices when you travel on public transport and if you are alone during the evening. Follow the advice of locals and program staff (e.g., if you are advised not to go jogging/walking in a certain area, listen to them and don't do it.)

In the case of an emergency call 112, which is the single European emergency telephone number, available throughout the European Union. The call is free of charge and is answered immediately by emergency centers that activate the medical, police and fire systems, depending on the situation. |

## ACCOMMODATIONS

Students will stay in shared apartments or in a student villa where they might be sharing rooms. There will be cleaning and bed linen washing, kitchen for cooking meals, washing

machine in unit and Wi-Fi. The apartment or accommodations will be about a 20-40 minute commute via subway to campus. There will still be opportunities to practice your language skills and build meaningful relationships with our community partners.

During excursions, all students will be housed in shared guesthouses, field stations, lodges, or small hotels/hostels.

Housing options during your Independent Study Project will be worked on together with the program's staff and must be approved by your academic director. Please note that ISP location may be limited due to public health or political concerns.

## TRANSPORTATION

The main means of transportation in Lisbon are tram, train, bus, and subway. While in Lisbon you will be provided with a monthly transport pass, the Navegante Metropolitano, which will allow you to travel through the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (AML), including Mafra, Sintra, Setúbal and Sesimbra.

To get to the university you can use the subway, the bus or by walking.

## COMMUNICATION

While you may want to be in regular communication with friends and family from home during the term abroad, please bear in mind that different time zones, unreliable phone lines, and changing program activities can complicate communication.

It's important to be clear with family and friends about your availability during the term. Many students recommend making an appointment to call home or to receive a call. You should also consider the impact of constant communication with friends and family at home on your cultural immersion.

Portuguese enjoy sending post cards to their family when traveling and perhaps you can also enjoy this tradition while away from home.



## PHONES AND E-MAIL

As part of SIT's commitment to student safety and security, all students are required to have a working cell phone capable of making and receiving both local and international calls, including a data plan so that your phone is operational when you are away from wifi. If needed, during orientation SIT Study Abroad staff can assist students in purchasing a local SIM card, and how to acquire minutes for calls and texting.

There are several cell phone companies in Portugal: NOS, MEO and Vodafone. They all offer a rechargeable card system that means that students won't need to have a contract. You can find many stores of these companies in Lisbon where you can get information about offers and prices.

The university campus in Portugal offers you free wireless Internet connection. Besides, you can also find multiple Wi-Fi areas both in Lisbon and in the other locations planned for the program. |



## MAILINGS

Unlike receiving a package here in the US, receiving a package at your program site is usually **expensive** and **problematic**. Customs agents must inspect all packages and you, as the recipient, are responsible for duty and storage fees. In addition, there are cases of items being lost in the mail or taking so long to reach the recipient that the recipient is nearly back in the US by the time the items are received. For these reasons, sending packages should be done only for emergency situations. Additionally, sending valuables is highly discouraged.

For this program, **DHL, FedEx, UPS services are available in country**. Despite cheaper prices, reliance on the US Postal Service is not advised due to delays and unreliability. When given the option, it's always a good idea to send packages certified and with a tracking number that allows the sender to track the package.

|The program staff can provide you with advice and the best address to send packages if needed. |

## MONEY

In addition to tuition, SIT Study Abroad program fees cover room and board throughout the

program. When room and/or board are not taken with the group, students will be given a stipend to cover related expenses. SIT will cover daily commuting costs, if any, and excursions that are part of the normal program itinerary. **Any domestic travel, interpretation services, or supplies necessary for the ISP are the students' responsibility.** Please plan accordingly.

|In Portugal and most parts of Europe students can access funds and pay in most stores from their US bank accounts using their VISA or MasterCard debit cards. Any debit card that is linked to the PLUS or CIRRUS networks should also work at ATMs in country, take under consideration though that you will be charged for every withdrawal. Credit cards (VISA, MasterCard) will also work as well. American Express and Discover are not as commonly accepted. ATMs are very easily accessible throughout Portugal. Traveler's checks are not recommended or useful. In case of an emergency, it is possible to get cash advances on major credit cards in Portuguese banks. |

Check current exchange rates: <http://www.oanda.com/currency/converter/>

If using a debit and/or credit card, you should contact your bank and/or credit card companies regarding your travel plans. If you don't inform these companies that you will be away, they will often assume the card has been lost or stolen and will put an immediate hold on the card. You should also check on costs of withdrawal, as these costs vary and can sometimes be very expensive. Renewing and receiving reissued credit and debit cards while on the program will be an expensive and highly inconvenient process. Before you leave for your program, please check the expiration dates on your cards to ensure that they will not expire while you are abroad. It is also very important that you make photocopies of all your debit/credit card information and leave them with someone you trust in case your card(s) is/are lost or stolen.

Following are suggestions for spending money during the program, including estimates for

textbooks, ISP-related expenses, medical expenses, personal spending, and gifts. Figures are based on recent student evaluations, though individual spending habits vary widely and **these costs are averages**.

A suggested total amount of money to budget ranges from **US\$1,650 to \$2,000**. Remember that you don't need this in cash, however, for some restaurants, smaller establishments, and market stalls they do not take cards so you will need to carry some cash (\$ 11.93 (€10) to \$23.87 (€20) is a sensible amount).

To determine where you might fall in this range, please examine your spending habits during a typical semester at your home school and consider any exceptional expenditures you may have on the program, including travel costs for your planned ISP or a specific personal expense.

Please budget approximately:

<b>Personal spending (from past student suggestions):</b>	\$1,400 – 1,600
<b>Books, printing, supplies:</b>	\$50
<b>Up-front medical costs</b> (you will get reimbursed for these expenses)	\$200 - 300 Per visit
<b>Visa</b> (subject to change and costs may vary)	\$110
<b>COVID-19 Test(s)</b> (costs may vary)	\$100-250
<b>Potential ISP travel expenses:</b>	\$50 – 200
<b>Estimated total:</b>	\$1,650 – 2,000

## VISITORS AND FREE TIME

**SIT strongly discourages and will not provide support for any visitors to students during the term**, due to the rigorous nature of the program and the disruption that such visits cause in program flow and group dynamics. Students

should be sure that relatives and friends are aware of this policy and that visits are scheduled for dates after the formal conclusion of the program. Students will not be excused from program components to attend to visitors. See the Attendance and Participation section of the [Student Handbook](#).

Please note that any visitors during the course of the program must plan their own independent accommodations; SIT can accommodate only their assigned student and, due to cultural and contractual understandings with SIT, should not be asked to host students' guests.

During the program, students follow an intense schedule of classes and field-based learning assignments, even during the ISP. Free time for pursuing an independent interest or hobby during the program will be limited. Your admissions counselor can advise you about particular interests you may have. For example, if you must keep in shape for your next athletic season, or if you play a musical instrument and want to know whether to bring it, we can help you to understand your schedule and any concerns or limitations that may exist. Please note that you will not have a long break during the program, such as Thanksgiving or Spring Break.

Please view SIT's independent travel policy here: <https://studyabroad.sit.edu/admitted-students/policies/independent-travel/>

# PACKING GUIDELINES

## LUGGAGE

Please pack lightly and include only necessary items. You should be able to carry all your luggage significant distances on your own. Try to minimize both the number of bags and weight of your bag(s) since you will likely be acquiring more belongings while abroad.

If carrying prescription medications, you should carry a letter from your doctor to prevent any concerns at customs or in transit. (Please see the “General Health Tips” section in the [Safety, Security, and Health](#) pre-departure document.)

Please check the current requirements of the Transportation Security Administration (<http://www.tsa.gov>) as well as those of the airline on which you are flying for domestic and international baggage restrictions.

## CLOTHING GUIDELINES

While informal dress is acceptable and common in most settings, it is essential to keep a neat, clean appearance. It is very important to have at least one set of clothes for semi-formal occasions and one set of clothes that can get dirty during excursions. You will experience seasonal changes during the semester so be sure to pack accordingly, for hot, cold, or rainy and windy days. It is advisable to bring clothes that can be used for both seasons. Not all homes and universities have central heating, so layers are recommended especially during the winter.

## COMPUTERS AND OTHER ELECTRONICS

It is **strongly recommended** that you bring a laptop computer. If you bring a laptop, the computer will be your personal property and responsibility. SIT **does not provide** personal property insurance and it is recommended that

you insure your computer or other valuables for full coverage. For details on SIT’s insurance, please see the full Description of Coverage on our [Student Insurance](#). SIT is not responsible for any duty tax you may have to pay when you enter the country, theft, or loss.



A laptop will be very useful both during the period in Lisbon and excursions, as well as during the ISP period. Remember to bring any necessary adapters. It is not necessary to bring a printer.

The university campus offers you free wireless Internet connection. Besides, you can also find multiple Wi-Fi areas in several cities in Portugal, often for free as well. Some WiFi areas include many coffee shops, restaurants or libraries, and even in the subway stations.

Please see the following website for information about electricity, voltage and electrical adapters: <https://www.worldstandards.eu/electricity/>.

## GIFTS

You may want to consider bringing small gifts of gratitude for people with whom you develop a special connection to thank them for their hospitality and to share a part of your culture with them. Try to choose gifts that represent you or the part of the country and/or community you live in. Think about what your city, state, or local artisans produce. Draw upon your personal interests or hobbies for ideas. Once you are on the program and learn more about the local culture, you will discover other ways to thank the community. Remember to bring pictures of your friends and family to share.

Former students have recommended calendars, picture books, postcards, music, or gifts from your hometown or college bookstore.

## WHAT YOU CAN AND CANNOT OBTAIN IN COUNTRY

Many imported (North American) brands of toiletries, medicines, vitamins, etc., can be bought in Portugal although local or European made brands can be a more affordable as a substitute. For American products you can find three specific stores (please check the following website:

<https://www.timeout.pt/lisboa/pt/compras/mercearias-para-comprar-produtos-americanos-em-lisboa> ). There are local as well as American brand tampons and cups available. |

Don't miss the Packing List on the next page! These packing guidelines are based on suggestions from past students and your academic director.



# PACKING LIST

## GENERAL

- 1 nice outfit suitable for a social event
- Lightweight clothes including pants, long-sleeved shirts, light T-shirts
- Underwear and socks (10-day supply)
- Warm pajamas or nightgown
- Slippers or flip flops (for use inside house. Flip flops not recommended for use outdoors because of the cobble stone sidewalks and roads.)
- 1 pair comfortable sneakers
- 1 pair sandals
- 1 pair nice shoes
- Rain gear (waterproof jacket, poncho, or umbrella)
- 2–4 pairs pants or jeans
- 1 skirt and/or dress
- 5–6 mixed long and short-sleeved t-shirts
- 2–3 blouses or button-down shirts
- Sweater
- Jacket or fleece
- Scarf
- Bathing suit
- Optional – workout clothes

## TRAVEL DOCUMENTS

- Passport
- 2 photocopies of your passport stored separately from your actual passport
- Photocopy of visa
- 2 passport photos
- Proof of COVID-19 Vaccination encouraged

## HEALTH/TOILETRIES

- Adequate supply of any medications you use regularly
- Small first aid kit (most supplies can be bought here)
- Extra eyeglasses and/or contact lenses
- Sunscreen (at least SPF 30)
- Sunglasses

- Wide-brimmed hat or baseball cap (for sun protection)

## OTHER IMPORTANT ITEMS

- Medium-sized day pack (to pack clothes for 3–4 days for excursions)
- Small, quick-drying towel
- Flashlight
- Portuguese/English dictionary
- Reusable water bottle
- Small luggage lock
- Laptop computer (*please insure it*)

